

So, respectfully, these changes should not pass this body without careful consideration by the committee of jurisdiction. A committee markup is the appropriate vehicle for considering such changes to assess the ramifications of the changes in this bill and to see if other changes are warranted.

I stand ready and willing to work with Chairman RISCH, Senator GRASSLEY, and other colleagues to make any needed changes to FARA, but because of all of these concerns that I have, I would object today to passing this bill out of the Senate without first giving the committee the opportunity to consider it and other potential reforms.

I urge my colleagues to give us the opportunity to work through this together and ensure the Foreign Assets Registration Act is fit for the 21st century. And because of that, I do object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Of course I am disappointed, but I know that Senator MENENDEZ is a serious legislator, and if what we have to do to do something in this area is work into the next Congress on this issue, I look forward to continuing to work for it.

The reason I am kind of disappointed is the fact that we had two Democratic bills and two Republican bills. I introduced my first bill in 2017, and it took a lot of work to put together the bill that I asked unanimous consent on, to work out the differences with several different approaches, and I thought that we had taken everything into consideration, particularly bringing together people from the Intelligence Committee and the Judiciary Committee that had interest in this legislation as well.

Maybe another reason I am disappointed out of that hard work that so many people put into this is the fact that on the part of particularly our Democratic colleagues, we have heard so much over the years, lecturing about foreign influence, and that is why I thought it would be easy to move forward today, and I am sorry it is not, but I look forward to January and starting over again and working with Senator MENENDEZ to get this job done. Hopefully, it will not take 3 years more to get something done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I look forward to working with the Senator from New Jersey and the Senator from Iowa. As I said, this is a very serious problem for the U.S. Government, and, thus, for the American people.

One of our greatest assets is also one of our greatest vulnerabilities. We are an open society. Our adversaries are not, and, thus, they use things like the internet for information warfare, whereas we see it as a valuable tool to do business, to stay in touch with our families, and to communicate with one another. Our adversaries are deter-

mined, and they are relentless, so I hope that just this little colloquy today will help alert more of our colleagues about the importance of our working together to address this. I look forward to being part of that process.

Nothing happens very quickly around this place. Sometimes you have to work on things for years to get them done.

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mr. President, speaking of working hard to solve problems, my hope is that we are closing in on our ability to pass the next COVID-19 relief bill. As the Presiding Officer knows, we have been at this for a while.

It has been since March that we passed the CARES Act, and we have tried a number of times to try to pass additional relief for our small businesses and individuals, provide more resources to our frontline healthcare workers—make sure that they have the PPE, the testing and that the vaccine that is now here can be deployed in a way that as many Americans who can get the vaccine as possible will do so.

Again, we know that the intervening election has been a problem because some people saw benefits to not solving the problem, and that would somehow gain them advantage at the ballot box. And still, today, there are still disagreements over a handful of controversial provisions, but as we enter the final days of the 116th Congress, it is now time to break that stalemate.

There is no doubt in my mind that every Member of this body has a little different vision about what the next relief package should look like, but as the old saying goes, we shouldn't let the perfect be the enemy of the good. The search for compromise—which is really part of our job description here—on some of the most controversial measures has left us emptyhanded, and it is time to set aside those pieces that we can't agree on and make progress on the ones we can.

First and foremost is funding for vaccine distribution that I alluded to a moment ago. Last week, the FDA approved the first COVID-19 vaccine, and the process of vaccinating our frontline healthcare workers is already underway. And there is a good chance that by this time next week, millions of doses of a second approved vaccine will be en route to hospitals across the country.

There is no question that the race to develop an effective COVID vaccine has been a success. It has really been nothing short of a miracle. Now it is critical we take additional actions to ensure the race to distribute the vaccine is successful as well.

We have been waiting and planning for a vaccine all year, but the funding Congress provided in the CARES Act to help execute the nationwide distribution project has run dry. While the cost of the vaccine itself is already covered, there are a host of other expenses that come with vaccinating tens of mil-

lions—maybe hundreds of millions—of people.

States are dipping into their other sources of funding to ensure they have the capabilities to carry out this widespread effort, but it takes specialized equipment from ultralow temperature freezers to store the vaccine, to masks and gloves and other PPE to protect those administering it, and it is easy to see that the costs add up quickly.

So the time for politicking and campaigning is over. Now is the time for us to solve this problem and ensure that this vaccine distribution program goes off without a hitch. This is the silver bullet we have been praying for and hoping for, and it would be shameful if our partisan dysfunction in Congress stood in the way of the success of Operation Warp Speed.

Second, we must support the men and women whose livelihoods have been upended by the pandemic. We all know that. We have done a lot, but we need to do more.

We didn't know in March how long this virus would last, how many lockdowns would ensue.

In April, as businesses closed doors to stop the spread of the virus, our nationwide unemployment rate skyrocketed to 14.7 percent. Tens of millions of Americans simply had no way to earn a paycheck, cover their bills, or even put food on their table. Many relied on the bolstered unemployment insurance benefits provided through the CARES Act, which helped cover bills and expenses until they were able to resume their jobs.

Fortunately, our economic engine did not remain stalled for long. That is not only due to what we have done here but what the Federal Reserve has done. And over the past several months, the unemployment rate has gradually ticked down and reached 6.7 percent in November.

I have no doubt that we will continue to rebuild our economy and put more people back to work who are eager to get back to work. But the reality is, it is going to take a while.

There are still workers with no way to earn a paycheck, and unless we take action, they are sure to face an even more dire economic strain in the days ahead. The day after Christmas—the day after Christmas—two key programs from the CARES Act expire, which will leave millions of Americans without the jobless benefits that they and their families need to survive. It would be a shame, it would be embarrassing and, frankly, just flat negligent on our part if we did not intervene to make sure that we establish a continuum of support for these folks who, through no fault of their own, find themselves without work.

These are the same people who, again, through no fault of their own, had the rug pulled out from under them earlier this year, and we can't leave them hanging. We have to help.

Third, we need to continue supporting our small businesses. Congress

invested \$670 billion in the Paycheck Protection Program. Every time I say a number like that—or \$3 trillion—I still have to pinch myself that we are spending the money. We need to spend this money in order to meet this pandemic, but the Paycheck Protection Program, in particular, has been a lifeline for America's small business owners, especially in my State.

Texas received more than \$41 billion through more than 417,000 individual PPP loans. This has given our businesses the resources they need to stay afloat and stay connected to their employees until things can return to whatever the next normal is.

But we know the process is happening much faster for some businesses than others. It is interesting: A number of businesses, I would say, are flourishing during the pandemic—it is really, really interesting—while others are just flat on their backs or nonexistent.

Many small businesses that have already received PPP loans are still operating at a significant loss. They are unable to bring in enough revenue to keep their businesses and employees above water, and they need more assistance. Again, that is because of a lack of demand or because of restrictions governments have placed on people in the interest of public health—some of them seemingly pretty arbitrary. I won't go down that path here. But these folks need help.

Currently, those businesses aren't eligible for a second draw of the PPP, and unless we want Main Streets across the country to turn into ghost towns, that needs to change. We need to reopen the PPP with additional funding for the hardest hit businesses to receive a second loan. This is the most effective way of keeping Americans connected with their employers and more small businesses on track for a strong postpandemic recovery.

There are a number of other businesses—small businesses—that didn't qualify for the PPP which need our assistance, too. Things like small, independent music venues are the best example of a critical Main Street industry that is dying under the current COVID restrictions.

That is why I worked with our friend from Minnesota, Senator KLOBUCHAR, to introduce the Save Our Stages Act, which will keep independent venues across America from closing their doors for good. This wouldn't just apply to live music venues in Austin, TX. This would apply to symphonies and, potentially, Broadway. This would apply across the board.

I am proud to say that 56 of our colleagues have cosponsored the Save Our Stages Act, making it one of the most widely supported stimulus proposals before the Senate.

Again, I know the Presiding Officer has had his shoulder to the grindstone on this topic for a long time now. We still have a lot of work to do, but we don't have much time.

Beyond these three goals, there is a lot more I would like to see in the re-

lief bill, and I guarantee all 535 Members of Congress would like to see more for other things in the relief bill. But the fact of the matter is, we have been unable to reach an agreement on a bill that includes the most controversial priorities, and it is time to take action where we can act and where we do have consensus and come back next year and try to do more and try to do better.

Each of these areas I just mentioned—support for vaccines, our workers, and small businesses—have that sort of strong bipartisan support. So I think all 100 of us—whether Republicans, Independents, or Democrats—should be able to line up behind a bill that supports these goals. Over the last several days, we have seen more bipartisan communication and cooperation than we saw in months—in the months leading up to this point, certainly since March. And I hope we are able to reach an agreement and pass another relief bill before gaveling out. As a matter of fact, I heard the majority leader say we are not leaving until we do, and I agree with that.

The American people have repeatedly called on Congress to provide support for those hit hardest by this pandemic, and we simply cannot and will not let them down.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). The Senator from Arkansas.

DEBORAH SAMPSON ACT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize a significant legislative victory the Senate delivered for women veterans that will eliminate barriers to care and services that many women face when accessing the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA estimates that women make up approximately 10 percent of our Nation's veteran population. That number is expected to increase to more than 16 percent within the next 25 years. As a result, the number of women veterans receiving healthcare from the VA has more than tripled since 2000.

The changing face of our military requires us to reexamine how we can best serve these veterans. The VA has been slow to modernize its delivery of healthcare and benefits to support their needs. Women veterans are more likely to face homelessness, unemployment, and go without needed medical healthcare. They are reluctant to turn to the VA for help. More than 50 percent of women veterans believe they are not entitled to or eligible for VA care. We must do more to fulfill our promise.

We need to create a culture at the VA that welcomes women veterans and makes them feel like they belong. It is long overdue, and we need to update the belief that when a woman seeks care at the VA, it is because her husband is the veteran. So often, it is not uncommon for a veteran employee to pass a woman in line and ask, you know, is her husband around.

Arkansans have shared with me suggestions for improvement that include:

expanding care options women can access at the VA to reduce the need for referrals to community care, increasing trained medical professionals who specialize in women's health issues, and enhancing privacy in exam rooms. These are reasonable steps that the VA can implement to ensure equitable access to services.

The good news is, we are one step closer to making these upgrades a reality, thanks to Senate passage of the Deborah Sampson Act. The Veterans' Affairs ranking committee member, JON TESTER, and I introduced this legislation, fittingly, named after a Revolutionary War veteran who disguised herself as a man to help defeat the British. In her spirit, we must do more to address the gender disparities at the VA.

We used the recommendations we heard from veterans in Arkansas, Montana, and all across the country to develop our legislation to eliminate the barriers to care. The Deborah Sampson Act creates a dedicated Office of Women's Health at the VA, expands the reintegration and readjustment group, counseling retreats for women veterans and their families, and improves call center services.

It increases the number of gender-specific providers and coordinators in VA facilities, trains clinicians, and retrofits VA facilities to bolster privacy and improve the environment. It provides access to legal services for women veterans and expands childcare for veterans receiving healthcare at the VA.

These are just a few of the improvements this bill requires the VA to implement so we can better serve the needs of women veterans.

I appreciate the leadership of Senator TESTER and the support of veterans service organizations and encourage Members of Congress to support this legislation. I applaud the Senate for advancing the legislation and urge my colleagues in the House of Representatives to quickly approve this bill so we can ensure women who serve in uniform receive the care and services that they so earned.

Also, as always, I want to thank the staffs of myself and Senator TESTER who worked so hard in this regard, and, simply, this would not have become law without their tremendous efforts.

So, with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Wyoming.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to ask our Democratic colleagues to join us Republicans in providing immediate relief—relief in the fight against coronavirus and economic relief for the people of this country.

Americans don't ask much of their government, but they are asking us for something right now. No. 1, they are asking to help control the spread of the coronavirus, and, No. 2, they are asking to help with an economic recovery.